

1. A method for signing an electronic document, the method comprising:
establishing an electronic signature appearance for an electronic signature;
determining a bounding region on the electronic document for the display of the
electronic signature appearance;
5 at the time of signing an electronic document, previewing the electronic signature
appearance in the bounding region; and
signing the electronic document with an electronic signature, the electronic signature
associated with the electronic signature appearance.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
10 configuring the electronic signature appearance at the time of signing the electronic
document.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein configuring the electronic signature appearance
comprises interacting with a user signing the electronic document.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein configuring the electronic signature appearance
15 comprises:
receiving user input activating controls for controlling textual and graphic elements
included in the electronic signature appearance.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein the controls comprise one or more of checkboxes and
buttons.
- 20 6. The method of claim 4, wherein previewing the electronic signature appearance includes
previewing a display in a configuration dialog box of the electronic signature appearance
within the bounding region and the controls for controlling textual and graphic elements.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein previewing the electronic signature appearance includes
displaying the electronic signature appearance within the bounding region on a display of the
25 electronic document.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
including in the electronic signature appearance textual elements automatically copied
from a certificate of a user signing the electronic document.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein:

establishing an electronic signature appearance comprises receiving user input selecting an electronic signature appearance from one or more existing electronic signature appearances.

5 10. The method of claim 1, wherein:

establishing an electronic signature appearance comprises interacting with a user to create an electronic signature appearance.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein:

10 establishing an electronic signature appearance comprises receiving an electronic signature appearance pre-configured by an author of the electronic document to be signed.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein determining a bounding region on the electronic document for the electronic signature appearance comprises interacting with a user signing the electronic document to establish the bounding region.

13. The method of claim 1, previewing the electronic signature appearance comprises
15 previewing the electronic signature appearance configured to fit within the bounding region.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein determining the bounding region on the electronic document for the electronic signature appearance comprises establishing a bounding region pre-set by an author of the electronic document.

15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

20 determining an optimal layout of the electronic signature appearance based on the dimensions of the bounding region.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

determining optimal dimensions of the bounding region based on the electronic signature appearance.

17. A computer program product, tangibly stored on a machine-readable medium, comprising instructions operable to cause a programmable processor to:

establish an electronic signature appearance for an electronic signature;

determine a bounding region on the electronic document for the display of the electronic

5 signature appearance;

at the time a user is signing an electronic document, display a preview of the electronic signature appearance in the bounding region; and

interact with a user to sign the electronic document with an electronic signature, the electronic signature associated with the electronic signature appearance.

10 18. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:

configure the electronic signature appearance at the time of signing the electronic document.

19. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein the instructions operable to configure the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to interact with
15 the user signing the electronic document.

20. The computer program product of claim 18, wherein instructions operable to configure the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to:

receive user input activating controls for controlling textual and graphic elements included in the electronic signature appearance.

20 21. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the controls comprise one or more checkboxes and buttons.

22. The computer program product of claim 20, wherein instructions operable to display a preview of the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to display in a configuration dialog box the electronic signature appearance within the bounding region and
25 the controls for controlling textual and graphic elements.

23. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to display a preview of the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to display the electronic signature appearance within the bounding region on a display of the electronic document.

24. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:
include in the electronic signature appearance textual elements automatically copied from
a certificate of a user signing the electronic document.

25. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to establish an
electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to receive user input selecting
an electronic signature appearance from one or more existing electronic signature
appearances.

26. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to establish an
electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to interact with a user to
create an electronic signature appearance.

27. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to establish an
electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to receive an electronic
signature appearance pre-configured by an author of the electronic document to be signed.

28. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to determine a
bounding region on the electronic document comprise instructions operable to interact with a
user signing the electronic document to establish the bounding region.

29. The computer program of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to display a preview of
the electronic signature appearance comprise instructions operable to display a preview of the
electronic signature appearance configured to fit within the bounding region.

30. The computer program product of claim 17, wherein instructions operable to determine a
bounding region on the electronic document for the electronic signature appearance comprise
instruction operable to establish a bounding region pre-set by an author of the electronic
document.

31. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:
determine an optimal layout of the electronic signature appearance based on the
dimensions of the bounding region.

32. The computer program product of claim 17, further comprising instructions operable to:
determine optimal dimensions of the bounding region based on the electronic signature
appearance.